



AXEMAN REPORT NOVEMBER 2006



FROM THE CDR

Dear Family & Friends of Alpha Company 1-121st FA BN,

Greetings from Kuwait. I hope this newsletter finds you all safe and well. We truly hope you all are continuing to enjoy safe and festive holiday seasons back home.

It's been another extremely busy month for the Axemen of Alpha Company as we continue to drive on with training, missions, R & R Leave schedules, Holiday Festivities, and squeezing in MWR events when possible.

Once again this month, Alpha Company was tasked with an additional mission of providing QRF (Quick Reactionary Force) for coverage north of the Kuwait/Iraq border while a new unit from Alaska that had arrived here completed its training requirements to ensure they were ready to assume the mission. And, once again, the Axeman of Alpha Company responded at a moments notice and effortlessly assumed these duties for 3 weeks. Words can not describe how proud of each and every one of your soldiers. They continue to amaze and impress not only myself, but all levels of command. HOOAH!!!

In addition to the new mission and the continued conduct of our regular escort missions, the troops are keeping busy honing their skills by conducting valuable training. Recently, we had the opportunity to have the **H.E.A.T. (HMMWV Egress Assistance Trainer) Simulator** here for the soldiers. This equipment replicates a rollover in a HMMWV for the crew. During this training, the soldiers rehearse their part of the "Crew Drill", ensuring they know what to do and how to respond if the unfortunate event of a roll over happens to them and they need to get out quickly.



CW2 David Cheney operates the H.E.A.T. Simulator for a crew during "HMMWV Rollover" training.



From l. to r.: SSG Gary Jandreau, CW2 David Cheney, and SSG Jason Liss oversee the operation of the H.E.A.T. Simulator for a crew during "HMMWV Rollover" training.



From l. to r.: SGT Carlos Velasquez, SPC Henry Gonzales, and SSG John Thibodeau "regroup" after conducting their Crew Drill in the H.E.A.T. Simulator.





AXEMAN REPORT NOVEMBER 2006



As with every fall season, we've been observing all the holidays with thoughts and prayers for all of our friends and loved ones back home, as well as all service members worldwide. In this month of Thanksgiving, we stop to give thanks to those Veterans that have come before us and have served with honor and dignity, as well as those who continue to serve with us during this infamous period. An interesting point was made to me the other day that I had not realized. Since the attacks of 9/11, we have now been engaged in this Global War On Terror longer than the time spent in World War II.

In addition to giving thanks to the Veterans, we'd like to extend our heartfelt thanks to all who made the Veteran's Night UMO Hockey Game such a successful event for all in attendance. Many, many thanks to **SGM(ret.) Kerry Birmingham, Skip Chappelle, the Friends of Maine Hockey, Operation Skybox, the Season Ticket Holders** who graciously donated their seats, **Coach Tim Whitehead and the UMO Black Bears Hockey Team, and the countless others** who made this event a true memorable one. I can tell you first hand that my family continues to talk about how much fun they had.

I'm sure you've all had a chance to see the banner picture which was posted on the website and on display at the game. In addition to displaying that banner here, I'd like to thank 1LT Stephen Spearin and all those involved in making additional banners for us to display. As soon as they arrived we put them right up.



One of the UMO Black Bear banners received from home.



Another of the UMO Black Bear banners received from home.

Speaking of **Bears** versus **Badgers** Hockey, special thanks to **Coach Chappelle** {I remember him as Coach} and **Andy Nickerson of Wight's Sporting Goods** for the donations of Shield Floor Hockey Equipment. We are continuing our plans for a friendly rival game of floor hockey. We are holding off for a bit until this current surge period subsides to maximize the amount of soldiers able to participate. We're making final touches to our homemade goals and determining the appropriate "uniforms" to wear to the event. Not to give away any of the surprises, but let's just say they will definitely know we are crazy "UMO Bears" fans. There will be plenty of pictures to follow covering this event.

While I'm on the subject of fun sports and rivalries, did anyone happen to catch the game between the **New England Patriots** and **Green Bay Packers**?



I believe the caption I read in an article stated . . . **Patriots Thump Packers 35-0**. There was all kinds of pre-game hype going on leading up to this much anticipated match up.



November

AXEMAN REPORT NOVEMBER 2006



Showing support for our New England team.



Wisconsin supporters showing support for their team.

For as much "hype" that led up to the game, it was definitely very quiet the following day. LOL. I wasn't about to rub it in . . . too much!!!

We hope our families and friends had a great Thanksgiving, as we were able to celebrate in a very festive meal. The dining facility went all out, as they always do, in providing a fabulous meal with all the decorations and trimmings of home. Here are a couple of pictures showing "the spread". There are more in the "**Closing Shots**" section in the back of the newsletter.



A Bread Basket . . . made of . . . bread.



The American Eagle.





AXEMAN REPORT NOVEMBER 2006



Getting away from sports, another event that recently took place here to give the soldiers a taste of home was an MWR sponsored outdoor acoustic concert presented by country music artist **Aaron Tippin**. Several of the soldiers took part in the entertainment, taking a well deserved break to enjoy the music. Afterwards, all the soldiers were able to get autographs and pictures taken with Aaron, a huge supporter of troops.



Taking in the sights and sounds of the Aaron Tippin concert are from l. to r.: SSG Peter Lawrence, SFC Paul Beaulieu, SPC William Pulliam, SGT Paul Woodman, SPC Russell Perry, SSG Gary Jandreau, and CPL James Barnard.



MSG James Tash presenting country music artist Aaron Tippin with an official Alpha Company "Axeman" T-shirt.

And finally, thanks to all of our supporters back home. Many thanks to the employees of Kennebunk Savings Bank in Kennebunk, Maine for the package of goodies, postcards, and letters. Thanks to **Ashley, Brenda, Christa, Julie, Linda, Lynn, Megan, Merianne, Nicole, and Brenda**.



A hand and foot print U.S. Flag created by the families and friends of SECFOR II.

To our outstanding UVCs and FAC representatives, thanks for everything that you do to support our families while we are away. And thanks for the support and touch of home with the awesome flag.

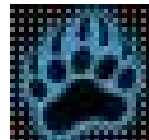
As always, to all our family and friends, we say thanks. We love and miss you all. Keep the letters and packages coming. Enjoy the holiday seasons and know you are always in our hearts, thoughts and prayers.

Until we chat again.

v/r

CPT Kent A. Cousins
Commander
Company A, 1-121st FA BN (SECFOR)
"AXEMAN 6"

GO BLACK BEARS!!!!





AXEMAN REPORT NOVEMBER 2006



HQS PLATOON

Happy Thanksgiving from the Axe-Men of Northern Kuwait!

Before we get down to business, here's a photograph from our glorious Halloween Pinata smashing.



Actually, **CPT Kent Cousins**, MEARNG, Limestone, ME was "testing the water" after being spun around by **SSG Peter Lawrence** (background), MEARNG, Benton, ME. When **CPT Cousins** actually took a swing, the Halloween Pinata was jerked upward out of his reach. **1LT H. Michael Gary**, MEARNG, Vassalboro, ME, took three swings and nearly knocked down the roof support. The successful Soldier, however, was **MSG Paul Kinsey**, NVARNG, Carson City, NV, of 3rd Platoon. He took one swing and the Halloween Pinata exploded.



Probably the best decoration was that provided by **SPC Christopher Corrente**, NVARNG, Las Vegas, NV, courtesy of his wife, who mailed a real pumpkin to him. **SPC Corrente** had fun carving the pumpkin in the quiet of his arms room before mounting it on the spike of the battle-axe. That night he put "glo-sticks" inside so that the pumpkin glowed merrily – and eerily – for several hours.

Thursday morning, our FOB was so quiet and empty it even felt like a holiday morning. While we were crawling out of our bunks and braving the cold dash from warm tents to the shower trailers and back, all of you were probably spending part of the evening planning your Thanksgiving Day. Maybe checking to see that the turkey was thawing properly, making your own last-minute dash to the grocery store, and recounting how many people you were going to have over. Or maybe you were making a list of everything you were going to bring over to someone else's house.

As for us, all we had to do was show up at the mess hall for turkey, mashed potatoes, stuffing, ham, and gravy. And corn on the cob and green beans. And glorious pumpkin pie, apple pie, cherry pie, and cake! With ice cream! And coffee! (If I sound a little excited at the memory maybe it has something to do with having to subsist on watermelon and cantaloupe in the mornings, along with smaller, healthier meals for the next 45-60 days.)



Here's a photograph of the serving line and a table decoration. (Photo by CPT Kent Cousins)



AXEMAN REPORT

NOVEMBER 2006



Enjoying their holiday meal are, from left to right: **SSG Richard Jerrell**, NVARNG, Las Vegas, NV; **SSG Jason Liss**, WIARNG, Plover, WI; **MSG Stephen Channell**, MEARNG, Bangor, ME; **SSG Gary Jandreau**, MEARNG, Fort Kent, ME; **MSG James Tash**, MEARNG, Houlton, ME, and **SPC Bryan Hunt**, NVARNG, Las Vegas, NV. (Photo by CPT Kent Cousins)

Just as an aside, when I asked **SSG Gary Jandreau** what his Thanksgiving plans were, he gave me one of the strangest looks I've ever received in my career and muttered something in French. (I tried taking French classes three times in college, but never completed them.)

One of the unsung heroes of the day is our own **MSG Joseph "Dave" Guerrette**, MEARNG, Presque Isle, ME. He's one of the supervisors at the mess hall, and throughout the meal he was rushing back and forth ensuring that everything was going as well as could be for us.

Thanksgiving is Thanksgiving no matter where we are, and there is a lot to be grateful for, especially when serving in a combat zone. But as you know, something is missing.

That's being at home with all of you. Even when surrounded by friends and comrades, it's not the same. There's no wonderful holiday cooking smells coming out of the kitchen, or giving all of you a hug and wishing each other a Happy Thanksgiving before sitting down at the dinner table.

Next year we can celebrate together and share glasses of egg nog with family and friends while we laugh and joke. And in those quiet moments during the day we'll all be grateful for one more thing on top of all of our blessings: we came back home.

So, Happy Thanksgiving everyone!

The Axe-Men of Northern Kuwait

SSG Stanley Hampton

Admin NCO

Company A, 1-121st FA BN (SECFOR)

"AXEMAN HISTORIAN"

1ST PLATOON

Seasons Greetings from 1st Platoon.

The holiday season is shaping up to be a very busy one for us. With several soldiers home on leave and a never ending mission load, many of our soldiers only exchange a brief hello on the way to and from the trucks as they prepare for and recover from missions. Our platoon is stretched from one end of the country to the other. But, true to form, we are making sure that the job is getting done and getting done safely.

As we go further into the holiday season, please keep the mail and care packages coming. It will really help your soldiers feel closer to home. Everyone is working very hard and putting in a lot of time on the road, and it is always nice to return to Camp and see mail waiting for you on your bunk.

Congratulations to **Staff Sergeant Ronald Ruhlin** on his recent and well deserved promotion, and to **SPC Glenn Cole** on his advancement.

The recent walloping of the **Pack** by our **Patriots** has helped to fuel the Alpha Company machine. Our friendly rivalry with the rest of the Battalion continues to point toward an inevitable meeting between the Wisconsin and Maine Hockey teams. Keep your eyes on the **Black Bears** for us.





AXEMAN REPORT

NOVEMBER 2006



At the Al Faw Palace on a recent trip to Baghdad are from l. to r.: Back row: SPC Wade Light; SGT Scot "Doc" MacKenzie; SPC Hugh Goodfellow; Center row: SSG Ron Ruhlin; SPC Kevin Tedesco; SFC John Martin; Front Row, SPC Dennis Troxell.

Keep your holidays safe and take lots of pictures to share when you are reunited with your loved ones next year. Take care and have a Happy Holidays. Until next time,

JOHN C. MARTIN

SFC, USA

1st Platoon PLT Sergeant

Company A, 1-121st FA BN (SECFOR)

"AXEMAN 15"

2ND PLATOON

Greetings to all.

November has been a busy month for 2nd platoon and the miles driven have continued to add-up. Our missions have taken us everywhere from Baghdad to the Turkish border. Soldiers have started to go on leave and we have all gotten a chance to work with new truck crews. So we play musical chairs and keep rearranging crews to fill in for the missing .

The weather has changed. It has rained a couple of times. The heat has broken and the desert is starting to turn green with both natural vegetation and the farmed fields. This could be a beautiful place if it had not been abused for the last one hundred years. The down side of forty-degree nights is that those riding in the gunners hatch bear the brunt of the cold. Near the Turkish border and higher into the mountains, it is getting colder and wetter. It is chilly walking around our FOB in Kuwait in the morning and at fifty miles an hour standing up in the truck and exposed from the waist up, the gunners will need every bit of their army issued of snivel gear.

One of the FOBs outside of Baghdad is a great place for convoys to stop as it has all the amenities. We can do our laundry, take showers, walk on the treadmill at the state of the art gym and curl up in the sun with a book for a few hours. You can also check your e-mail or go shopping for oriental carpets. They will teach you all about thread count, vegetable versus chemical dyes and handmade or machine made carpets. I hope to buy one before I come home.

Another great stop is the FOB near beautiful city of Mosul. There are trees and birds everywhere as well as old architecture to look at. I bought two Turkish rugs and had them mailed home. They should be there in two or three weeks. The only downside side this FOB was our tent was immediately on the edge of the runway area. We can sleep through the sound of departing helicopter gun ships though the C17 cargo jets did wake us up.

If nothing else, driving around Iraq has convinced us these people truly need our help. There is no trash service in Iraq. Everywhere we drive there are smoldering piles of garbage. With no centralized or municipal trash pick up, the locals drag their garbage to the nearest vacant lot, start it on fire, and walk away. Since most of the towns are built along the main roads, driving through town means peering through clouds of stinking, choking smoke.

They burn everything in one mess; plastic milk jugs, newspapers, vegetable peelings, spare tires and dead animals. Where ever you look there is either a currently burning trash pile or the remains of an old one. The size of the town does not matter. We saw the great mosque in Baghdad and one quarter of a mile later was choking on trash fire smoke.





AXEMAN REPORT

NOVEMBER 2006



There are more lights at night than we expect from watching news stories. I was prepared for total blackout at dusk and was surprised by the prevalence of lighting. But the lighting is not consistent. One house will have lights and the neighboring house will not. I discovered the answer while parked in the middle of a small town. Our driver had stalled the truck and in the sudden quiet I heard the sound of hundreds of tiny generators purring away in the night. So there is no central power grid. The Iraqis are just making due the best they can.

The country was brutally oppressed under Saddam Hussein for thirty years. In that time, they fought three wars: Desert Storm, against the Iranians and Iraqi Freedom and numerous uprisings and rebellions. They also suffered fifteen years of UN embargo. The countryside is littered with burned out cars and trucks as well as abandoned and destroyed military equipment. They could supply the scrap iron and steel needs of the Japanese for ten years if someone could pick it all up and ship it there.

We have seen no sign of any municipal water and sewage system except on the FOBS. The people haul every bit of water they use or pull it out of shallow hand dug wells. Having lived on a farm with a hand dug well I am sure they are drinking and bathing in water that was filtered through the burning trash piles and heaps of wreckage. Sewage is tossed out into the back yard or the gutter and that must find its way into the wells also.

The plight of these people is desperate and the lack of basic municipal services coupled with religious strife makes the US the only force capable of helping them out.

Lastly, we want to thank all of our family members who have been so supportive. Everyday sees more boxes of goodies and presents arrive. You are certainly keeping the mail clerk busy. Every tent we go in is just packed to the ceiling with cookies, candy and other snack foods as well as soap, shampoo and other toiletries. Lets hope we don't have to pack it all up when we leave and ship it home. We will never be able to afford the postage.

All of us here in Kuwait wish our families back home a happy and healthy Christmas season.

Until next time.

SSG Michael Hall
2nd Platoon Squad Leader
Company A, 1-121st FA BN (SECFOR)
"Axeman 21"



Soldiers from 2nd Platoon escorting a recent convoy.



SGT Christopher McBean shown recently with some local Iraqi children.





AXEMAN REPORT NOVEMBER 2006



3RD PLATOON

AXEMAN 35 BAGHDAD BLOG

LET IT SNOW! LET IT SNOW! LET IT SNOW!.....Hey, you can always dream.

Hello and Seasons Greetings y'all. Hope everyone had a great kick-off to their Holiday Season.

Here, the beat goes on. The missions continue to pour in and we have responded with great success. All the Soldiers of 3rd Platoon know that without our loved ones back home that our mission success would not be possible.

On behalf of 2LT Ferrer and the rest of the men of 3rd Platoon, I would like to take this opportunity to express our heart felt gratitude for your continued support. The encouragement from friends and family is the key to a Soldier's morale and overall well being. Amidst the chaos of our mission and news of the political climate back home, knowing that we are supported in such a way helps to center our focus, and helps to remind us that giving the blessing of a free society to a people that has never had it and securing U.S. and global interest's by helping to stabilize the Middle East, is a just cause. We are honored to answer the call and honored to know that we have the back-up of great Americans like you. THANK YOU!

Here's wishing everyone an absolutely wonderful Holiday. In our hearts....we will be there with you.

MSG Paul R. Kinsey

3rd Platoon PLT SGT

Company A, 1-121st FA BN (SECFOR)

"AXEMAN 35"



SFC Douglas Perez on the moon? Wait, that's Southern Iraqi.



SPC Douglas Pierce prepares to "chill" in his living area.



SGT Jason Lashley saying . . . "here's looking at you . . ."

November

AXEMAN REPORT NOVEMBER 2006



1LT Rommel Ferrer checking his headspace.



SPC Saintil Doree doing his Bond impersonation.



SPC Nathaniel McDougall squaring away his uniform.



SPC Joshua Logan getting some much needed rest . . . In his monkey sleeping position.



SGT Colby Ford . . . from some green planet. Actually performing TC duties at night.





AXEMAN REPORT

NOVEMBER 2006



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
1st Squadron, 221st Cavalry
6400 N. Range Road
Las Vegas, Nevada 89009



4TH PLATOON

4th Platoon "Ghostriders" November News.

The month of November had the Ghostriders busy on many fronts. In addition to the normal missions, a portion of the platoon was tasked to pick up the QRF role while Soldiers from another unit completed their validation training. The operations tempo has continued its brisk pace as over 80% of the platoon has been in country for over half of the deployment. Several Troopers are rapidly approaching the 100 day mark.

On the road, Ghostriders continued to leave an impression on those they encountered. COL Smith and CSM Schultz of the 143 Group coined the crews of A43 (CPL Chavez, SGT Spanski, SGT Chupp), A44 (SSG Gahm, SGT Randall, SPC Trapp), and A46 (SFC Smethurst, SGT Alcosiba, and SPC Dallenbach) for the professionalism they displayed when they had the opportunity to ride along with them.

From the home front, C-Troop 1-221 CAV was officially disbanded in the transition of the Squadron to the ARS. The C-Troopers and the rest of 4th Platoon in country are now the last Ghostriders, but we continue to drive on and maintain the high spirits that have always set us apart.

The Troopers of 4th Platoon would like to take the opportunity to thank all those back home who support us and wish everyone a safe, healthy, and happy holiday season.

Until next month.

MSG John P. Bersalona

4th Platoon PLT SGT

Company A, 1-121st FA BN (SECFOR)

"AXEMAN 45" A.K.A. "GHOSTRIDER 45"



A group photo prior to movement: from l. to r.:
SSG Douglas Gahm; SGT Tyler Spanski; COL Larry J. Smith, Chief of Staff, 143rd TRANSCOM (FWD); SPC Randolph Chupp; SPC James Trapp; SPC John Randall (rear); SPC Robert Dallenbach (front, kneeling); CPL Robert Chavez; SFC Cory Smethurst (rear); CSM Michael D. Schultz, CSM 143rd TRANSCOM (FWD) (front kneeling); and SGT Michael Alcosiba.



SSG Justin Harris next to a Romanian BTR 80 on a bridge in Iraq.



November

AXEMAN REPORT NOVEMBER 2006



CLOSING SHOTS

Below are some more photos taken during the past month that we'd like to share with everyone back home. Enjoy.



??? Is that Scottie "Too Hotty" and the Top???



Kuwait version of a horse trailer.



CPT Kent Cousins promoting Brian Green to Sergeant / E-5.



MSG John Bersalona preparing for Gunner's duties.





AXEMAN REPORT NOVEMBER 2006



CLOSING SHOTS (CONTINUED)



Soldiers from 3rd Platoon {A32 Crew} prepare to burn the midnight oil.



1LT H. Michael Gary with some local Iraqi children pose for a picture.





AXEMAN REPORT NOVEMBER 2006



CLOSING SHOTS (CONTINUED)



Delicious and beautiful Thanksgiving Day cake.



More Thanksgiving Day customized "Trimmings" from the dining facility crew.



Behind the counter (from l. to r.), 1LT John Gates and MSG John Bersalona serve (from l. to r.) 2LT Rommel Ferrer and 1LT Fredrick Garcia their Thanksgiving Day meal.



Enjoying their Thanksgiving Day meal together are (from l. to r.): SFC Joel Chaffee; SFC Richard Deutch; SGT Brian Poplin; SSG Timothy Wadley; SPC Jacob Melendrez; MSG John Bersalona; and SPC Bobby Aleman.



November

AXEMAN REPORT NOVEMBER 2006



CLOSING SHOTS (CONTINUED)



Taking their turn serving Thanksgiving Day holiday meals are (from l. to r.): 1LT Michael Lee (1-121st FA Battalion S-2; 1LT John Gates; and MSG John Bersalona.



More Thanksgiving Day customized "Trimmings" from the dining facility crew.



BG Keith L. Thurgood (center), Commanding General of 143rd TRANSCOM (FWD) serves soldiers during the Thanksgiving Holiday Meal.



The 1-121st BN Leadership serving Thanksgiving Day holiday meals are (from l. to r.): LTC Scott Rice, Battalion Commander; CSM Jeffery Fletcher, Battalion Command Sergeant Major; and MAJ Brian Wolhaupter, Battalion Executive Officer.



November

AXEMAN REPORT NOVEMBER 2006



CLOSING SHOTS (CONTINUED)

It's beginning to look a little bit like Christmas!!! Just missing the SNOW!!! Happy Holidays!!!

